

Sample Letter Encouraging Local News Anchors to Test Their Homes for Radon

*Local news anchors are, in many ways, local celebrities. They are often perceived as friendly and trustworthy and can serve as excellent examples for radon activities. One way to capitalize on this is to encourage a local news anchor to publicly test their own home for radon. To set this up, you will need to send a letter to the anchor at their TV station. Use the sample letter below as a guide for creating your own. Be sure to print the letter on your organization's stationery and fill in local information where **[indicated]**. Be sure to follow up this letter with a phone call to answer any questions the anchor may have, and to schedule a meeting.*

Dear **[News Anchor]**

I am writing to request your participation in a National Radon Action Week activity that will ultimately help you to protect your family from the health risks posed by radon. National Radon Action Week kicks off with a Presidential Message from the White House asking Americans to take preventative action on this health risk. The purpose of the week is to draw attention to radon as a serious public health issue and, more importantly, to motivate Americans to take action to protect themselves from radon health effects. It is a health hazard that is present in elevated levels in about **[X]**% of **[area]** homes, which compares with over 6% of homes across all of America. Radon is a naturally occurring, invisible, odorless gas that is harmlessly dispersed in outdoor air, but when trapped in buildings, can be harmful at elevated levels. The science on radon has been formidable over the years, but never before have we had such overwhelming scientific consensus and robust data to support that exposure to elevated levels of radon causes lung cancer in humans.

The National Academy of Sciences (NAS) in February of 1998 presented the findings of their Biological Effects of Ionizing Radiation (BEIR) VI Report: "The Health Effects of Exposure to Indoor Radon." This new report by the NAS is the most definitive accumulation of scientific data on indoor radon. The report confirms that radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the U.S. and that it is a serious public health problem. The NAS concluded that radon causes between 15,000 and 22,000 lung cancer deaths each year.

Your popularity and credibility among **[area]** residents presents a tremendous opportunity to call attention to this serious public health issue. Our request is fairly straightforward and will require minimal effort on your part. Here is what we would like you to do:

- We would like to provide you and other Channel **[number]** News anchors with free radon test kits for your homes. We ask that you conduct a short-term radon test of your home. Testing is reliable when the instructions provided with the kit are followed and is as simple as opening a package, placing a radon detector in your home in a designated area, and, after the prescribed number of days, sealing the detector back in the package and mailing it to a lab.
- We will have the results of your radon test analyzed and share them with you. If the test indicates a high radon level, we will initiate a second, long-term test (which is just as simple as the short-term test) and will help you to determine whether your home needs any radon-resistant repairs. If you so desire, we will also recommend radon mitigation specialists.

- Finally, we would like you to publicize the results of your tests on one of your newscasts during this year's National Radon Action Week, which is October 15-21, 2000. This would involve having you explain how simple it was to test, how straightforward the results were, and, if applicable, how straightforward mitigation is. We would encourage you to videotape the testing process and can arrange for lab experts to discuss the results on the air, if you so desire.

The message that needs to be conveyed is that testing homes for elevated levels of radon is simple and inexpensive. And, if discovered, radon problems can be fixed. **[Area]** residents need to be informed about radon, radon testing, and about what to do if they discover that their home has elevated levels of radon.

An effective way to share this message might be to include a discussion or interview during the broadcast, between you and **[Spokesperson]** , **[organization's]** radon expert. **[He/she]** can explain to your viewers the facts about radon, radon testing, and making repairs to a home with an elevated radon level. **[He/She]** can also answer typical questions such as: Is testing complicated? Expensive? How long does it take? Are repairs expensive? What is involved? Can I do it myself or should I hire someone?

It is clear from watching your program that Channel **[number]** is concerned about the people of **[your community]**. We hope you will participate in our efforts, which are in conjunction with those of the American Lung Association and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, to educate Americans about the dangers of radon exposure and to encourage them to take action to identify and fix radon problems in their homes.

We will be in touch during the week of **[date]** to answer any questions you may have and to determine your interest in participating in this activity.

Thank you for your consideration of this serious public health issue.

Sincerely, **[your name and title]**